

MEMORIAL

TO THE

Honorable the Legislature

OF THE

STATE OF NEW YORK,

FOR FOUNDING A



STATE WOMAN'S HOSPITAL.

1857.

NEW YORK:

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TO THE

Honorable the Legislature of the State of New York.

WE, the undersigned, approach your Hon. Body with that deference which is due to your exalted station, and that confidence which arises from a knowledge of your disinterested patriotism. In the consciousness of the purity of our intentions, and in the conviction of the vast importance of our contemplated design for the promotion of the best interests of humanity, we shall neither withhold from you a full consideration of the measures in which we are engaged, nor prove reluctant in setting forth the weighty reasons which have impelled us thereto.

We disclaim all personal and individual interest in the premises. We seek neither the distinction of office, nor the awards of party zeal.

A plain statement of facts is all we have to offer.

The object of this petition is the permanent establishment of a new scientific charity; one demanded by moral claims and physical suffering; one to the absolute need and public utility of which personal testimony will be adduced; one which is no longer a matter of experiment, but the eminent success of which, on a small scale, warrants legislative aid and sanction; and finally, one which if endowed and protected by the State, will immeasurably advance the interests of science and human well-being, and redound to the honor of the State, already distinguished for her charitable institutions.

Your memorialists, *therefore*, beg leave to lay before your Hon. Body some reasons for establishing in the city of New

York, under the auspices of the State, a hospital, to be called,

THE WOMAN'S HOSPITAL OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK.

Women are subject to diseases peculiar to the sex. They pervade every grade of life, from the highest to the lowest.

The *Virgin* may suffer from a long catalogue of the most painful maladies.

The *Wife* may be worn down with untold miseries, growing out of the marital relation.

The *Mother*, in giving birth to her offspring, often sustains such horrible lacerations and injuries as to render life unbearable.

Old Age, as well as *Maturity*, has its thousand female sufferings, calling for sympathy and aid; while cancerous and malignant diseases of women require special investigation.

These diseases are not self-limited and self-curative, as are many others; but when left alone they go on from bad to worse, till they completely shatter the nervous system, embitter existence, poison the sources of domestic happiness, lay the foundation for hereditary disease, and in many instances upset the intellect, driving their unfortunate victims to the mad-house.

They are of great frequency, and this, with their delicacy, naturally suggests the propriety of a special hospital for their treatment.

Some of your memorialists, fully impressed with this view, suggested its importance, about two years ago, to a few ladies in the city of New York, who immediately formed themselves into an Association for establishing such an institution, and on the 1st day of May, 1855, it went into operation.

It contains about forty beds, and has demonstrated the need of a larger hospital, for it has not had a vacant bed since its inauguration, and scarcely a day passes that some poor applicant is not turned away, simply for want of room. Its portals were generously thrown open, by its munificent managers, to suffering woman, without regard to nativity or

residence—the only question asked, “What was her disease?” and the only distinction made, that the poorest and greatest sufferer had the best claim to a place within its walls. Hence, we find patients in it from the remotest parts of the Union, and from almost every section of the State; and hence, its enlargement, and its permanence as a State institution, are of vital importance to the present, as well as to future generations.

The Woman’s Hospital, as now constituted, has been sustained under great disadvantages by the heroic efforts of a few self-sacrificing women, and mostly by their own contributions, because a proper sense of delicacy forbade their blazoning before the world the sorrows and sufferings of their sisters, whom misfortune drove to this Charity for relief.

Your memorialists, therefore, pray your Hon. Body to lend a fostering care to this little hospital, till a larger, nobler, better one can be provided by the munificence of the State.

It is unnecessary to go into a long statistical detail to show the need of such a hospital as is now proposed for this great State of four millions of people. We will not dwell on the importance of hospitals for special diseases, nor pretend to demonstrate a truism so well established as the universally acknowledged fact, that the State of New York is sadly deficient in hospital accommodations, munificent as she has been to other charities.

We need not tell you that five thousand poor women, in the city of New York alone, annually knock at the doors of our dispensaries; and that our dispensary physicians see cases of female disease daily, which cannot be properly treated, because there is no suitable hospital for them. Nor need we refer you to the thousands of poor women to be found throughout the State, whose patient sufferings are known only to themselves, their physician, and their God; whose claims upon the State for protection and relief are as great as are those of the blind, or the insane; whose cases, too, are perfectly curable, and could be easily trans-

ferred from any section of the country to a proper hospital, for care and treatment. Nor need we refer to the statistics of many of our insane asylums, showing that from twenty-five to forty per cent. of all cases of insanity in women arise directly from organic female disease, which, in most instances, might be remedied by appropriate and timely treatment.

These are facts so notorious, that your memorialists believe it unnecessary to dilate upon them.

Dismissing, then, this part of the subject, upon which there can be no difference of opinion, they come boldly up to the question—What is the duty of the State in the premises?

And here your memorialists would respectfully beg leave to suggest their plan for organizing at once a State Woman's Hospital.

At the last session of the Legislature, a bill was introduced for establishing in the city of New York such a Hospital. It passed the Senate, but, for want of time, was lost in the Assembly.

At the same session, a bill was introduced providing for the disposal of the State Arsenal in the city of New York, which, for like reasons, was also lost.

Experience has shown that the Arsenal is not conveniently located and hence a willingness to dispose of it.

The building is a substantial one, three stories high, two hundred feet long, and fifty feet wide. It cost the State one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars. Its grounds extend from Sixty-third to Sixty-fifth Street, and from Fifth to Sixth Avenue, comprising ten acres, more or less, lying within the limits of the Central Park.

It is located near the geographical centre of Manhattan Island, and, in a quarter of a century, will be in the centre of its population. It, therefore, occupies the most appropriate place for such a hospital as is proposed, and could be easily converted to this purpose. Indeed, it is almost the only purpose of public utility to which it is adapted.

A Woman's Hospital would not receive any of the ordinary endemic or contagious diseases to be found in general hospitals; and on that score would be as unobjectionable as an asylum for the deaf and dumb, or for the blind.

The park would fall short of the wishes of its projectors, if it were not graced by occasional imposing, elegant architectural structures. Indeed, the bill creating it, contemplated the permanence of the State Arsenal in its present location.

The Arsenal is now an ornament to the city, and, with little expense, could be made a most elegant adornment of the great Central Park.

The building, if razed to the ground and sold, would not bring more than five thousand dollars—indeed, this is the most that has been offered for it.

Why then should it be sacrificed? Why thrown away, when it can be so appropriately converted to a purpose that would beautify the city and ennoble the State?

As a hospital, it could be made ready for use in a year, and would contain about two hundred beds. Its location and form admirably adapt it to any alteration or addition that the growing wants of the State might demand.

The erection of a great hospital, under State patronage, to be dedicated to woman, is one of the necessities of the age in which we live, and sooner or later it must be accomplished.

Your memorialists appeal to your Hon. Body, as conservators of the public good, not to forego the present opportunity of fixing it upon a permanent basis.

No proper appeal has ever been made to the State in behalf of any of our great eleemosynary institutions, without receiving that attention and aid demanded by their claims.

With a just feeling of pride can every citizen point to those beautiful enduring monuments of State munificence, the asylums for the deaf and dumb, the blind, the insane, and the idiot. Has the State ever turned a deaf ear to their cry? Be it said to her honor—Never! Can she now turn a deaf

ear to the moanings of the mothers and daughters of our land? God forbid!

The proposed Woman's Hospital has equal claims with these upon the State, because it will be capable of conferring equal benefits upon all classes of its citizens.

No woman can claim exemption from the peculiar diseases of her sex, more than she can from blindness or insanity. Who then is not interested in a hospital for their improved treatment?

Vast as is this subject in its bearings upon human happiness, your memorialists will not enter into any further detail of the great good to be derived from the permanent establishment of this noble charity.

The relief of individual suffering is the least of its benefits, and upon this plea alone might its claims rest. But when viewed in its importance, as a great school for the better education of physicians holding in their hands the dearest interests of society, it will be seen at once how valuable it must prove to science, as well as to humanity.

Your memorialists, *therefore*, pray your Hon. Body to convey the present State Arsenal in the city of New York, with its grounds, to a board of trustees or governors, with full power to organize a hospital for the treatment of the diseases peculiar to women; making provision for the reception of patients, afflicted with such diseases, from all parts of the State,—the hospital to be placed under an efficient medical board, and to be known and designated as, “THE WOMAN'S HOSPITAL OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK.”

And your memorialists will ever pray, etc.

Signed,

JOHN W. FRANCIS, M.D., LL.D.,
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STATE MEDICAL SOCIETY.

At the regular Annual Meeting of the STATE MEDICAL SOCIETY, held in Albany, on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th of February, 1857, Prof. ALDEN MARCH, President, in the Chair, the following resolution, prefaced by reading the above memorial, being moved by PROF. QUACKENBUSH, and seconded in a few eloquent and pertinent remarks by DR. BISSELL of Utica, was unanimously adopted.

Resolved—That the State Medical Society, having heard the memorial of the Physicians of the City of New York to the Hon. the Legislature, on the subject of founding a Hospital, to be called “The Woman’s Hospital, of the State of New York,” cordially endorse the same and recommend its adoption.

